10: d'Orleans--352 T-3 (1891-92) 1894 Laos
116, 527, 539, 832

[LSS: During the New Year celebration in Luang Prabang.]

"In one of the pagodas we visit, I can hear the prayers of the bonzes mingling with the soft whisperings of the love-stricken swain, one of whom delivers himself thus:--

'Oh! my love, you who are my very own heart, I love none but you. It is you only whom I love. You are white and green like the eggs of a crow. I implore of you to be my life.'"

10: d'Orleans--372-373 T-3 (1891-92) 1894 Laos-1-2
116, 539, 584

[LSS: For a description of the game of repartee during which this dialogue was spoken, see Laotians, category 533, pp. 370-371] "Here are some scraps of the chanted dialogue which I took down from the lips of the interpreter.

HE.—'I am very well off. I even have some elephants.'

SHE. —'I am not free.'

HE. —'If you marry me, you will have nothing to do and you will be free to act as you wish.'

SHE. —'I am married. I have a child.'

HE. —'That doesn't matter. I'll arrange with your husband so that he will let you go.'

The chorus replies in a refrain too free to be reproduced here.

SHE—'You are married.'

HE. —'Ask the inhabitants of the village; I am not married.'

SHE. - -'I have known for a long time that you are poor. You haven't even a rupee.'

HE. —'I haven't a rupee, but we will go into business and we shall have a good deal of money.' [373]

SHE. —'Don't you hope to marry me?'

THE CHORUS. —'It is sad to marry an old woman.'

HE. —'I cannot marry you now, but later on when your husband is dead. You have a very pretty face, pretty as the god in the centre of the pagoda, who is so beautiful that

I dare not look at him.'

And he pretends to run away in terror. The young girls burst into laughter.

SHE. —'At a small rivulet there is not very much to drink.'

HE. —'Here are two candles. My face is well lighted. Does it please you or not? You must say.'

SHE. —'I love you, and you don't love me. Whom am I to marry?'

HE. —'When we die, we will die together; we shall be burned together.'

SHE. —When the flames mount up you will leave the young married woman.'

He goes up to the group of girls, and lights them with the candles, then returns to make love to the old woman.

HE. — 'If you become my wife I will not abandon you. I could not find any one so pretty as you.'

SHE. —'We are going to bid you good-bye. If you love me we shall meet again in a few days.'

HE. —'When I go away from here I shall find no girl so pretty as you. I shall die.'

Upon this the party breaks up."

Thaïs of the Mékong The genesis of Thaï settlement in the valley of the Mékong is infinitely more obscure. There is a complete lack of documentary evidence if we overlook the Laotian legends which are indeed charming in their animation and naïveté but which do not offer any guarantee of authenticity or even, in most cases, of probability (2). We must nevertheless admit that 174 773

2. Cf. Mission Pavie, Études diverses, Vol. II, "Recherches sur l'Histoire du Cambodge du Laos et du Siam" (manuscripts translated by Auguste Pavie's Cambodians).

the wonderful tales of Muong-Theng's gourd and of the division of the earth between the sons of Khoun-Borom do not contradict our notions as to the expansion of the Thaï race in Indo-China, and that they constitute an obvious allusion to the arrival of the invaders in eastern Laos.

Here is the legend, of which there are several versions, in as "denuded" and condensed a form as possible (3): 539 174 773

3. This legend of the gourds very probably takes its inspiration from the passage in the Ramayana which tells how "Loumati, the second wife of Sagara, gave birth to a green calabash. It broke, and sixty thousand sons came out of it. The nurses put this 'little' family out to grow in a bed of butter." (Ibid., Introduction, p. xxxvii.)

/31/ The king of Heaven Phya-Theng sent the sage Khoun-Borom to reign on earth with two divine wives, Nang-Et-Keng and Nang-Yoma-kara. Mounted on a white elephant with black ears and tusks which were curved, transparent and crossed, Khoun-Borom came down to the vast plateau of Muong-Theng (the land of angels, known today by the Annamite name Dien-Bien-Phu) in the spot called Na-Noï. There a gourd plant of prodigious dimensions had grown in the center of Kouva pond and had fastened onto a fig tree on the bank which was itself of unrivaled size and which helped the plant to support two enormous fruits. The celestial envoy had the gourds pierced, and out of them, in incalculable quantities, there at once came gold, silver, cloth, perfume, plant seeds, men, women, oxen, buffalo, pigs, dogs, chickens, ducks, etc., which spread throughout the world. And since his two wives had given him seven sons, Khoun-Borom

539 separated the peoples and divided them among his sons:
174 1. Khoun-Lo received Muong-Swa, the land of millions of ele-
773 phants and of white parasols (Lan-Xang-Hom-Khao);

2. Chet-Chuong received Muong-Phoueun (plateau of Tran-Ninh and valley of the Nam-Nhiep as far as the vicinity of Borikane);

/32/ 3. Nhi-Fa-Lane received Muong-Ho (Sip-Song-Panas, the land of the Twelve Thousand Ricefields);

4. Chu-Song received Prakan (the Thai regions of Upper Tonkin and of the Black River);

5. Saya-Phong received Muong-Nioun (Xieng-Mai or Lan-Na, the land of millions of ricefields);

6. Kham-In received Muong-Louvo (Siam or Lan-Piyea, the land of millions of granaries);

7. Louk-Poun, finally, received Hongsavadi (Pegou and Pagan).

Before sending them forth Khoun-Borom said to the seven kings who were his children: "You shall live peacefully and as good neighbors, the elder ones not quarreling with their younger brothers... Go forth, and remember that you were born of the same womb."

174 It is not impossible that this division, in spite of its fabulous
631 character, should mark the first stage of the history of the Thaïs in the Mékong valley, at a time which the legend does not indicate but which might belong to the second half of the thirteenth century. This date would indeed correspond approximately to an inscription of Rama-Khameng, king of Sukhothaï, "written in Cambodian characters on the four sides of a sandstone stele" and translated by Father Schmitt, in which are mentioned for the first time the names of Vientiane and Vien-Kham (Tran-Ninh) in /33/ the basin of the "Khong river" (1). But whereas the Thais of the Ménam had suc-

1. Cf. Mission Pavie, ibid. /Études diverses, Vol II, "Recherches sur l'Histoire du Cambodge du Laos et du Siam" (manuscripts translated by Auguste Pavie's Cambodians)/, pp. 175ff., and G. Maspero, "Le Royaume de Vieng-Chan" (Revue indochinoise, 1904, pp. 497 and 498).

ceeded, in the course of relatively brief stages, in forming a compact Siamese kingdom which was rapidly freed from Kmer domination, the Thaïs of the Mékong remained divided for a much longer time.

Having probably come from their land of origin through the secondary valleys of the Nam-Ta, the Nam Ou and the Nam-Ngun, they founded more or less rival principalities: Cri Cudhamanagari (Muong-Swa-Luang-Prabang); Muong Phoueun (Xieng-Kham, later

pious king who justified the bonzes' prophecies by his deeds. He built a magnificent pagoda to the memory of his father, the Wat-Visoun (2), the materials for which were requisitioned from the vassals of the northern provinces. Legend has it that the raft carrying the columns provided by the king of Tran-Ninh sank downstream from Pak-Vet, and the inhabitants of the region still say today that they can be seen at certain times of the year beneath the waters of the Nam-Khane. 643* 346 175* /539/

2. The edifice which bears this name dates from the time of the king Zakarine (1898). The enormous "stupa" next to it, which covered rich treasures which have only recently come to light, is now in the process of being restored.

Edict against the cult of the "Phis." The king's great piety and his mystical attachment to the /73/ dogmas of orthodix Buddhism made him intolerant of the Brahmanic practices which continued to be honored by the peoples of his States. In 1527 he prohibited the cult of the Genii and decreed that all the temples erected to the "Phis" should be demolished. A pagoda called "Sisouvannathevalok" (1) was built on the very site of the sanctuary 771 175* 643* /778/

1. This pagoda was destroyed by a tornado in 1883. The king at that time, His Majesty Sisavang-Vong, had it rebuilt in 1905 on the original foundations.

of the tutelary Genie of the capital. But it was impossible, even for the supreme chief of existences, to drive from the heads of people as fatalistic as his subjects were the innumerable superstitions which they attached to accidents, to diseases and to the phenomena of sky, earth and water. Despite the royal ordinances the cult of the "Phis," together with a belief in sorcerers and witches, persisted and still persists today.

Phothisarath was the first of the kings of Lan-Xang to leave his Xieng-Thong palace and reside at Vientiane for many years. 663 175*

Thanks to its central location and its comparative nearness to the kingdoms of Ayuthya and Annam, this city had grown extensively as a consequence of the development of trade. The Kmers, who had been in full decline /74/ since the ruin of Angkor by the kings of Ayuthya, no longer had any influence there. The 633

Laotian provinces, over which it exercised only nominal authority as yet (2). It must, however, combat the rights which Annam /161/

2. Even over the old principality of Vientiane, now three-quarters depopulated, where it had had the wisdom, or the weakness, to leave the old chiefs of muongs in charge of the government and had required of them only an oath of fidelity and the payment of personal and land taxes in the form of one large annual tribute. /631/

might one day be led to assert over these regions, and it must place them under military occupation so as to present the emperor Tu-Duc, and eventually the Quai d'Orsay, with a fait accompli without further delay. The great invasion of Tran-Ninh by the Hos was to furnish it a pretext in 1873.

/242/ Invasion of Tran-Ninh by the Hos (1872). A large band of "Red Flags," numbering about two thousand pirates who had been driven out of the Black River by the "Yellow Flags" towards the end of 1871, fell upon the plateau by way of Xieng-Ko, which it sacked despite the desperate resistance of the inhabitants, and entrenched itself in the island of Bandon near the village of Banban. A first column which Chao-Hung sent against it fled bravely at the first contact with the invaders, and since everything ends in a song in the land of Laos, their panic was at once turned to ridicule and put in couplets which are still sung today (1). 563 175* /167/ /579/

1. The following is a translation of the first of these couplets: 539

Sanousit leaves his opium pipe which is lost.
Sisania throws away his opium lamp.
Chao-un-Vico abandons his Annamite gong.
All is lost, all is thrown away.
They hide in the forest, gasping with fear.
They do not even keep so much as a pin.
They hasten homewards through the brush.
By the shortest road.
For three days it is impossible to eat.
Chao-un-Vico's face is no longer human (fear has distorted his features).

"It seems that this refrain was sung whenever Sanousit, 563 175*

771 and to which is added the pantheism of the "Phis." Their general
779 doctrine, however, includes a belief in an "element which creates all things" and in a future life, the sanction of their dogmatic taboos and precepts, in a place of eternal beatitude which it is possible to inhabit here on earth and which is, at bottom, nothing else but the annihilation of being in the "Nirvana" of the Buddhists.

Among the Lus, even more so than in China and the Indies, the basis of this mystical and dreamlike religion which is so well suited to their temperament is an idea of the nothingness of things, the uselessness of effort and even of action. It is, in a word, the most complete pessimism and the annihilation of energy and will.

775 Various beliefs. 1. The following is an incantation or prayer
769 for [158] dying persons which gives a good picture of the system of the world and of the idea of metempsychosis:

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The sky and the earth are growing dark!
Come out, souls, and gain "space"!
The spirits of the parts of the body are joined together and form only one!
Listen to the law of Buddha:
We teach the road which leads to the kingdom of Buddha, the kingdom of the rising sun.
The one soul, the union of the spirits of the body, knows today that birth and death are alike!
What is birth?
Nothingness produces the generative breath.
The breath produces fire.
Fire produces water.
Water produces earth, mother of all beings.
Birth is produced by harmony and perfect equilibrium of the elements.
What is death?
Death is a return to the beginning by the reversal of causes.
Earth masters water.
Water masters fire.
Fire masters air.
Air masters nothingness.
Nothingness always remains nothingness.
Nothingness is infinite.

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Death is produced by a lack of harmony and equilibrium among the elements.
Sympathy of the spirits produces a man.
Antipathy of the spirits produces a saint.
He who understands this can transform his nature and reach a point where he knows neither birth nor suffering nor death.
He will not know desire or grief!
He who, as he draws his last breath, repents of all his faults in deed, intention and thought regains his original purity. His soul goes to paradise so that, after "time" has passed, it may again be incarnated at the epoch of "rebirth" in the body of a good, just and happy man.

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2. We shall now give an extract from the work of Captain Gosselin, who gives a good definition of the spirits or souls in Laotian beliefs which are particular to each human organ and faculty. His description will be found to agree with what we have said at the beginning of this chapter.

[159] "The existence of man consists in the union of several organs, the cooperation of which helps to regularize the mechanism of vital formation. Over each of these organs presides an immortal personality which is called the soul of the organ. These souls, which are thirty-two in number, are as follows:

"The soul of hair on the head; the soul of body hair; the soul of the fingernails; the soul of the teeth; the soul of the skin; the soul of the flesh; the soul of the nerves; the soul of the bones; the soul of the cartilages; the soul of the glands; the soul of the heart; the soul of the spleen; the soul of the peritoneum; the soul of the liver; the soul of the lungs; the soul of the large intestine; the soul of the small intestine; the soul of digested food; the soul of food to be digested; and the soul of the brain.

"These twenty organs are produced by the male substances, that is to say by the father. The twelve others originate from female substances, or the mother. They are:

"The soul of the bile; the soul of glutinous matter; the soul of the synovia; the soul of the blood; the soul of the sweat; the soul of